

Stated Session Meeting Minutes

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

April 26, 2026, 12:30 pm

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on April 26, 2026. Moderator Tom Buchanan declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m.

Elders present: Bob Brewster, Dennis Calbos, Brian Herndon, Caly DePalma, Kirche Rogers, Deb Millwood, Haylee Nunn, Karl Barnett, and Jack Pannecoucke

Elders present on Zoom: Melissa Cobb

Elders absent: Rebecca Silver and Pam Thompson

Devotional – Jack Pannecoucke

Jack's devotional centered on the book *Life Together: Prayer Book of the Bible, Life of the Bible* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His reflections included the importance of praying together and learning how to pray, the role of Christ in teaching believers how to pray through the Lord's Prayer, and learning prayer in the same way a child learns from a parent.

Jack opened the meeting in prayer.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the March 21 Stated Session Meeting were reviewed and accepted by consensus into the record.

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was accepted by consensus with the addition of the decision to change the May Session meeting date.

Clerk's Report

Kirche Rogers shared correspondence from Thornwell and the PCUSA Stewardship and Funds Development.

Financial Report

Chair of the Finance Ministry Team Karl Barnett reported that church finances remain well funded.

Business

Finance Ministry Team – Eli Lilly Grant Proposal

Director of Music Aaron Carter-Enyi and Trevon Hood were in attendance to answer questions regarding a new grant Aaron received from Eli Lilly. The grant is for \$5 million for up to 5 years beginning in January 2027. The grant has been awarded in support of the Gullah-Geechee Initiative that Aaron has helped to lead for several years. The work will

involve recording and archiving the stories of the Christian faith, life, and music of the Gullah-Geechee culture. Aaron will serve as the executive producer and conduct the recording work. UGA has received a subaward to provide theology scholarship, and Covenant is being offered the opportunity to receive a subaward of \$500,000-\$600,000 annually, to be maintained separately from Covenant's budget. Covenant would directly receive \$60,000-\$70,000 annually.

Covenant's options:

1. Subaward of up to \$2.8 million over 5 years.
2. A smaller subaward with fewer tasks for which the church is responsible (e.g., not administering payments to Gullah community participants).
3. Covenant would not receive a subaward, though Atlanta University Library would pay for facility usage (Aaron's use of office space and possible occasional uses of the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall).
4. No involvement (including no office space).

Finance chair Karl Barnett made the motion approved by the Finance Ministry Team (a second was not required): **After prayerful consideration across several meetings and in consultation with experts, the Finance Committee has concluded that the accounting and financial concerns of a proposed grant from the Lilly Foundation to Covenant Presbyterian Church via AUC Library are acceptable. As other concerns are beyond the scope of this committee, we recommend that Session now consider the grant opportunity in its entirety.** With no further discussion, the **motion carried**.

After a period of questions and discussion, Pastor Tom moved that the Session move into Executive Session. The motion carried unanimously.

Following Executive Session, and after further discussion, Options 1 and 3 arose as the top choices.

Motions for Choosing Options:

For Option 1: Haylee Nunn moved that the Session vote to approve Covenant's acceptance of the Eli Lilly grant's subaward of up to \$2.8 million over 5 years. Caly DePalma seconded. Voting in the affirmative: 3, Voting against: 7. **The motion failed.**

For Option 3: Dennis Calbos moved that the Session vote to approve Aaron Enyi-Carter's usage of office space at Covenant for administrative tasks at the rate of \$500 per month. Brian Herndon seconded. Voting in the affirmative: 9, Voting against: 1. **The motion passed.**

Assistant Director of Music Position

- The Personnel Ministry Team approved the Assistant Director of Music position in principle pending final Worship Ministry Team input.

- The Worship Ministry Team completed its review of the job description and is ready to form a search committee.
- **Caly DePalma made a motion to approve the position and move forward with creating a search committee.** Karl Barnett seconded. With no further discussion, **the motion carried.**

Elder Resignation

- Pamela Thompson submitted verbal and written resignations from the Session and the Worship Ministry Team due to health reasons.
- **Jack Pannecoucke moved that the Session accept Pamela Thompson's resignation from the Session and Worship Ministry Team.** Deb Millwood seconded and **the motion carried.**

Nominating Committee Reactivation

- The Nominating Committee, elected the previous year, was reactivated in the wake of Pam Thompson's resignation.
- Existing members include Pam Knox, Phil Hale, and Warren Combs (chair), though Warren is no longer on Session.
- Pastor Tom explained that a Session member should be included on the Committee, and Haylee Nunn volunteered to serve.
- **Pastor Tom moved that Session nominate Haylee Nunn to the Nominating Committee.** Dennis Calbos seconded. With no further discussion, **the motion carried.**
- **Dennis Calbos moved to hold a congregational meeting on May 17, 2026, for the purpose of nominating a new elder to the Nominating Committee.** Karl Barnett seconded. With no further discussion, **the motion carried.**

Commissioners to Presbytery Meeting

Pastor Tom announced that a NE Georgia Presbytery meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., and he requested two volunteers to attend. Deb Millwood and Bob Brewster offered and were appointed as commissioners.

Date of Next Meeting

Due to the Pentecost Luncheon on Sunday, May 24, 2026, the next Session meeting was rescheduled to Tuesday, May 19, at 6:15 p.m.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Tom expressed appreciation to Session, the choir, handbells, and congregation for their support during Lisa's time in the hospital and recovery at home.

Announcements of Ministry Teams

Buildings and Grounds - Team Chair Jack Pannecoucke reported that Dogwood Cleaning LLC was hired to clean fellowship hall and breezeway, including sweeping and monthly buffing. Current cleaner Evelyn will continue her employment due to financial need. Total cleaning expenses remain approximately \$800 over the \$23,000 budget.

Christian Education - No report.

Congregational Care - Team Chair Melissa Cobb reported that the memorial service for Jim Whitney was well attended. Session expressed appreciation for the Congregational Care Team's organization of the reception.

Fellowship - Team Co-Chair Caly DePalma stated that the Pentecost celebration on May 24 will include a luncheon rather than the Strawberry Festival, with a red dessert contest to be held.

Finance - No report.

Mission & Outreach - Chair Bob Brewster reported that the Team met last month and is determining how to allocate remaining budgeted funds.

Personnel - No report.

Worship –

- The Team continued discussion regarding the new music position.
- Efforts are underway to improve online streaming capabilities, including the purchase of wireless transmitters.
- Easter services were well attended, with approximately 30–40 additional attendees.
- Preparations are underway for Pentecost.

Motion to Adjourn and Closing Prayer

There being no further business, Dennis Calbos moved, and Caly DePalma seconded that the meeting be adjourned. With no further discussion, the motion carried. Pastor Tom closed the meeting with prayer at 3:00 pm.

Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 6:15 p.m. Deb Millwood has the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Kirche Rogers, Clerk